

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

**McCrossan Boys Ranch District
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2007**

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Dates of On Site Visit: March 6 & 12, 2007

Date of Report: April 18, 2007

This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by Special Education Programs. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

- Promising Practice** The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
- Meets Requirements** The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
- Needs Assistance** The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement and is out of compliance.
- Needs Intervention** The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement and is out of compliance.
- Not applicable** In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.
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Principle 1 – General Supervision

General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data Sources Used:

1. McCrossan Boys Ranch School Improvement Plan 2005 – 2007
2. SD SIMS data collection and reporting system
3. McCrossan Boys Ranch Dakota STEP assessment results
4. Title I Annual Needs Assessment
5. East Dakota Educational Cooperative staff development plan
6. Structured input from general and special education personnel
7. Comprehensive plan
8. Special education student file reviews

Promising Practice

The steering committee determined a promising practice for McCrossan's is funding is allocated and opportunities are available and encouraged to all educational staff for continued educational advancement and learning beyond annual district-wide required trainings, such a staff development opportunities through ESA 2, TIE, DOE, Tech Prep, etc.

The steering committee noted a promising practice is McCrossan Boys Ranch is fully accredited under the SD DOE. A school improvement plan has been submitted to DOE that covers the 2005 – 2007 school year. The component parts of the plan serve to integrate program goals through Title I, technology, curriculum and staff development plans. Student achievement data is used extensively to establish district wide goals. The school program is also recognized as a Title 1 neglected and delinquent program. The East Dakota Educational Cooperative's consolidated application narrative addresses district plans to promote graduation and completion of transcribed course credits during each student's residential stay.

Meets Requirements

The steering committee determined child find activities are implemented through a system of internal referral and evaluation of students in residence. The McCrossan Boys Ranch procedures satisfy the requirements of Child Find through the referral process in regard to students in residence.

The committee concluded McCrossan Boys Ranch has an effective pre-referral and referral system in place to ensure students are identified without unnecessary delay. The committee noted there are a total of 10 educational staff members at McCrossan Boys Ranch with time set aside at weekly teacher meetings. These members are referred to as a "Core Team", and they discuss students with possible special education needs. The committee indicated the "Core Team" staff encourages the active involvement of administration and educational staff from each student's home school district.

The steering committee indicated there is not a “set graduating class” at McCrossan’s. Students graduate by semester or individually when they have met the graduation requirements of the district. In the 2005-2006 school year, five of ten McCrossan High School graduates were special education students. By the end of the first semester of the 2006-2007 school year, 8 students graduated from McCrossan’s. Two of the eight students were special education students.

The committee reported East Dakota Educational Cooperative is responsible for and ensures McCrossan Boys Ranch employs/contracts an adequate number of personnel who are appropriately supervised and fully licensed or certified, to work with children with disabilities.

Needs Improvement:

Because no referrals have been made, the steering committee determined McCrossan’s needs to heighten teacher awareness regarding the pre-referral process for students who may be in need of services.

The steering committee concluded general and special education staff require additional in-service training in accessing student achievement information and assistance in using that information to structure curriculum choices and setting individual student achievement goals.

Not Applicable:

The following general supervision requirements do not apply at McCrossan’s. There are no private schools in the district. The district does not have any students placed out of district. Students leave McCrossan for various reasons, but they are not considered to have dropped out. Suspension or expulsion is not option. McCrossan is a residential treatment facility, so no students have been suspended for more than 10 days. It is an alternative setting.

Validation Results

Promising Practice

The monitoring team did not validate the steering committee’s promising practice pertaining to staff development, because this is a requirement. McCrossan Boys Ranch being accredited by the South Dakota DOE and East Dakota Educational Cooperative’s consolidated application narrative addresses district plans to promote graduation and completion of transcribed course credits during each student’s residential stay was not validated by the monitoring team as a promising practice. Accreditation, graduation, and a transcript of course credits for each student placed at McCrossan’s is a requirement.

Meets Requirements

Through interviews and file reviews, the McCrossan Boys Ranch referral process, graduation requirements, and staff opportunities for professional development were validated by the team as meeting the general supervision requirements.

Needs Assistance

The team did not agree with the steering committee that the staff needs improvement in identifying students who may need a referral for an evaluation. Through interviews, it was determined strategies and interventions implemented by the Core Team at weekly meetings have proved successful at alleviating the need for student referrals.

The monitoring team validated Special Education staff are certified and provided with several opportunities for personnel development. The monitoring team did not agree with the steering committee's decision that general and special education staff require additional in-service in accessing student achievement information and assistance in using that information to structure curriculum choices and setting individual student achievement goals. Through interviews and file reviews, the team determined functional academic assessments are being used to determine student curriculum needs. In addition, in interviews, the team learned McCrossan Boys Ranch is implementing new and innovative academic curriculum programs.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data Sources Used:

1. SD Dept of Education SIMS.net student data collection and reporting functions
2. Referral information
3. Teacher meeting notes
4. Title I Needs Assessment
5. East Dakota Educational Cooperative staff development plan
6. McCrossan Boys Ranch training documentation
7. American Corrections Accreditation (ACA) file review data

Meets Requirements

The steering committee concluded McCrossan's ensures that FAPE is available to children ages 10 to 18 years old who reside in the school district/agency and are eligible for special education, including children who reside in group homes, foster homes, or institutions if their parents are residents of South Dakota.

The Steering Committee determined McCrossan Boys Ranch solicits feedback through the following means: survey distribution, weekly teacher and team meetings, e-mail correspondence, phone and mail correspondence with parents, placing agency personnel, etc. (see phone log), parental participation and input in IEP meetings. Contact with former students is restricted by residential policies.

Not applicable

McCrossan Boys Ranch is a year-round school; therefore, ESY is not applicable. McCrossan's cannot expel or suspend a student; thus, suspension and expulsion is not applicable.

Validation Results

Meets Requirements

Through interviews and file reviews, the monitoring team validated McCrossan Boys Ranch meets the requirements of FAPE.

Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation

A team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input, conducts a comprehensive evaluation. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data Sources Used:

1. Personnel Record forms
2. Student file reviews
3. Review of evaluation reports
4. Comprehensive plan
5. Phone and contact logs

Meets Requirements

The steering committee determined McCrossan Boys Ranch staff ensures reevaluations are conducted within required timelines to the greatest extent possible. Some of the files reviewed indicated logical and understandable barriers to full compliance. In many cases students arrive at the Ranch with outdated IEPs, missed reevaluations, incomplete records and are under time schedules that do not provide sufficient time for accurate evaluation of performance.

Out of Compliance:

The steering committee concluded McCrossan Boys Ranch special education personnel and administration need to further solidify known requirements relative to written notice and consent for evaluation procedures. In most cases documentation indicates appropriate written notice and attempt to obtain consent (via mail and phone) before assessments are administered to a child as part of an evaluation or reevaluation, but consent is not always received. The committee determined McCrossan has to establish consistent adherence to procedures.

Needs Improvement:

It was concluded by the steering committee McCrossan needs to Improvement in the following areas:

- Listing the evaluations and evaluators on consent and prior notice after the team, including the student's parent(s), has determined what evaluations need to be given.
- Personnel need additional training regarding functional assessments.
- Written/ narrative accounting of functional assessments needs to be included in the evaluation reports with consistency
- Special education personnel and administration need to further solidify known requirements relative to eligibility determination

Validation Results

Meets Requirements

The monitoring team validated McCrossan Boys Ranch staff ensures reevaluations are conducted within required timelines to the greatest extent possible. The team noted instances when timelines were not met; however, the reasons were beyond the control of McCrossan Boys Ranch.

Needs Assistance

Through file reviews, the monitoring team did not validate the areas identified by the steering committee as needing assistance. The team found:

- Evaluations and titles of the evaluators are listed on the prior notice
- The special Education Instructor is very knowledgeable about functional assessments.
- Functional assessment information is documented in a written report
- Special education and administration were knowledgeable about eligibility requirements

Out of Compliance: Needs Intervention

ARSD 24:05:25:04 Evaluation procedures

School districts shall ensure, at a minimum, that evaluation procedures include the following:

(7) The child is assessed in all areas related to the suspected disability, including, as applicable, health, vision, hearing, social and emotional status, general intelligence, academic performance, communicative status, and motor abilities;

The monitoring team found students diagnosed as having an Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder had not been evaluated in that area in Student Files 1, 5, and 7.

Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), and complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data Sources Used:

1. District comprehensive plan
2. File reviews
3. Notification of FERPA and public awareness
4. Personnel training

Promising Practice

A promising practice identified by the steering committee was that all IEP's, addendums, evaluation reports, eligibility determination, and other special education documents are provided to parents at the meeting or mailed should they be unable to attend. All information is sent to the parents with self-addressed, stamped envelopes following all meetings to ensure parents are thoroughly informed of a student's FAPE and to encourage parental involvement.

Meets Requirements

The steering committee indicated the parental rights brochure used by the district contains all required content. The brochure is published by the SD Dept of Education Special Education Programs. In addition, procedural safeguards are provided to parents with prior notice for the first meeting

conducted following an eligible student's placement at McCrossan Boys Ranch and annually. The committee also concluded graduation or completion of an approved program is addressed at least one year prior to graduation date.

Although the district makes adequate attempts to gain consent, but due to the nature of the facility, the committee found consent is not always received. They did conclude that two or more attempts were made to gain consent for reevaluation.

The steering committee concluded the comprehensive plan procedures address the appointment of surrogate parents. These procedures meet regulatory requirements. A list of individuals who serve as surrogate parents in the district, as well as their applications and personal information is available and included in all applicable student files. Documentation of termination of parental rights or reasonable attempts to find parents is also provided for students who have surrogates assigned to them. Due to the large percent of students in the district on IEPs whose parental rights have been terminated or the whereabouts of the parent(s) are unknown, the district ensures the rights of the child are protected by appointing a surrogate in each of these situations.

All educational records pertaining to students attending McCrossan Boys Ranch School are subject to procedures that ensure confidentiality and provide parents full access to all information regarding their child's evaluation, placement, progress, and rights.

The steering committee determined McCrossan's comprehensive plan has policies/procedures in place to address a complaint. McCrossan's has never had a complaint procedure filed with Special Education Programs. In addition, there are policies/procedures in place for responding to a request for a due process hearing, although a request has never been filed,

Needs Improvement:

When detailing district graduation in each student's IEP, the steering committee concluded McCrossan needs to list each course by name including elective coursework.

Validation Results

Promising Practice

The team did not validate the promising practice identified by the steering committee. The regulations require all IEP, addendum, evaluation reports, eligibility determination, and other special education documents be provided to parents at the meeting or mailed to the parent should they be unable to attend the meeting.

Meets Requirements

The monitoring team validated McCrossan's Boys Ranch meets procedural safeguard requirements.

Needs Assistance

The team found no IEPs that did not specify each course and elective for transition age students; therefore, this was not validated as area in need of assistance.

Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**Data Sources Used:**

1. Student file reviews
2. District professional development planning
3. Participation in SD DOE SEP statewide conferences & workshops
4. Title I needs assessment
5. SIMS net reporting

Meets Requirements

The steering committee determined the prior notice used by McCrossan contains all of the required content. In addition, they concluded from file reviews that McCrossan's provided written notice to parents five days prior to the IEP meeting, and it has never refused to hold an IEP meeting at the request of a parent. The committee also concluded the IEP team included the required members. An appropriate IEP is developed and in effect for each eligible student. A copy of the IEP is given to parent at the meeting or mailed if the meeting is held by teleconference.

Based upon file reviews, the steering committee concluded transition evaluations were conducted to gather information regarding the student's interests and documented in the student's IEP Present Levels of Performance. The student was invited and/or attended their IEP meeting. Representatives from other agencies were invited to participate in the IEP meeting for each student of transition age.

The steering committee concluded a statement of transition services/activities was documented to ensure that transition plans for students are a coordinated set of activities, reflecting student strengths and interests to prepare them for post school activities. They noted McCrossan

staff has had relevant, specific, and recent training in the provision of transition services and writing transition plans.

Needs Improvement:

The steering committee noted McCrossan needs to ensure consistent adherence to the development of present levels of academic achievement and functional performance that are linked to the evaluation and indicate specific strengths, weaknesses, and how the student's disability affects the student's educational performance in the general curriculum.

The committee concluded McCrossan's needs to monitor annual IEP dates and conduct annual reviews within 365 days, except when circumstances arise beyond McCrossan's control.

Validation Results

Meets Requirements

The steering committee's conclusion that the district ensures the written prior notice and IEP document includes the required content, the IEP team is comprised of appropriate team membership and the IEP is given to parent at the meeting was validated by the monitoring team.

Through the review of files, the team validated transition age students are invited and attend their IEP meeting. In addition, it was noted that agency representatives were invited to each transition age student's IEP meeting.

The team validated through file reviews that comprehensive transition evaluations are given and the student's transition strengths and needs are documented in the IEP present levels of academic achievement and transition IEP pages.

Needs Assistance

The monitoring team did not find any annual IEPs that had not been held within the 365 day requirement; thus, the team did not validate the steering committee's conclusion that this is an area at McCrossan Boys Ranch needing assistance.

Out of Compliance: Needs Intervention

ARSD 24:05:27:01:05 Content of individualized education program

A student's IEP must contain a statement of the student's Present Levels of Academic Achievement and Functional Performance (PLAAFP), including how the student's disability affects the student's involvement and progress in the general curriculum.

The steering committee identified McCrossan Boys Ranch IEP PLAAFPs to be in need of improvement; however, the monitoring team concluded this to be an area needing intervention. In all PLAAFPs reviewed by the team, the functional assessment information was not skill specific. Student files 1, 3, 5, and 7 did not address how the student's disability affected his performance and improvement in the general curriculum. Parent input on the PLAAFPs page was not included in Student files 3 and 5.

Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data Sources Used:

1. Student file reviews
2. Functional assessment from the general education curriculum
3. Content area placement tests
4. Administrative evaluation of general education teachers efforts to provide differentiated learning opportunities
5. Provision of specific goals, objectives and modifications required for each student served in the general education environment
6. Survey information from students, staff, administration and teachers

Meets Requirements

The steering committee concluded McCrossan's comprehensive plan provides procedures for determining placement options using the continuum of alternate placements.

The steering committee concurred from file reviews that all students have been successfully placed in their least restrictive environment, which is fully included in the regular classroom with modifications at McCrossan Boys Ranch. The modifications they receive, the intensive cognitive behavior program that is in place, highly structured school day, and one-on-one assistance from special education teachers and paraprofessionals in the regular classroom provides for services in the least restrictive environment throughout their residential placement.

Validation Results

Promising Practice

In interviews with general education staff, it was learned the boys residing at McCrossan's have several opportunities to engage in recreational and leisure activities that also enhance their learning. Examples given were attending SDSU Cultural Day, the museum, and cross country skiing. The monitoring team concluded these activities for students receiving special education services and their nondisabled peers is a promising practice at McCrossan Boys Ranch.

Meets Requirements

The monitoring team validated McCrossan Boys Ranch meets the requirements for least restrictive environment.